I CLAIM:

    1.   A character input system using a keyboard comprising a plurality of keys, at least some of the keys each being assigned at least one Hindi script character, and at least one key being assigned a halant, the key assignments being spatially grouped on the keyboard according to their phonetic characteristics.

    2.   The character input system of claim 1 wherein the key assignments are also grouped according to the vowels and consonants.

    3.   The character input system of claim 2 wherein Hindi script consonants are spatially grouped according to Vargs and Non-Vargs.

    4.   The character input system of claim 3 wherein the keys comprising each Varg are grouped on keys that are adjacent or diagonal to one another on the keyboard.

    5.   The character input system of claim 4 wherein the keys comprising each Varg are grouped in a single row on the keyboard.

    6.   The character input system of claim 5 wherein the keyboard comprises five Vargs of consonant keys that each contain five phonetically-related consonants.

    7.   The character input system of claim 6 wherein the five Varg consonant sets are assigned to keys that correspond to **q-w-e-r-t, a-s-d-f-g, z-x-c-v-b, y-u-i-o-p,** and **h-j-k-l-;** on a standard keyboard.

    8.   The character input system of claim 1 wherein the Hindi final consonant keys are grouped together on the keyboard.

    9.   The character input system of claim 8 wherein the Hindi final consonant keys are grouped together on a row of the keyboard.

16

10.   The character input system of claim 8 wherein Hindi final consonant keys are assigned to keys that correspond to **n-m-,-.-/** on a standard keyboard.

11.   The character input system of claim 1 wherein the keyboard comprises a plurality of Hindi script vowel keys, each vowel key being assigned to a Hindi script vowel.

12.   The character input system of claim 11 wherein the Hindi vowel keys are grouped together on the keyboard.

13.   The character input system of claim 12 wherein the Hindi vowel keys are grouped on keys that are adjacent or diagonal to one another on the keyboard.

14.   The character input system of claim 13 wherein at least some of the Hindi vowels are assigned to keys that correspond to the number-row on a standard keyboard.

15.   The character input system of claim 14 wherein the diacritic Hindi "vowel signs" (Matras) may be accessed by pressing a modifier key with the appropriate vowel key.

16.   The character input system of claim 1 wherein the keyboard is adapted for use with the Hindi language.

17.   The character input system of claim 1 wherein the keyboard is adapted for use with an Indian Brahmi-based script based on similarities to Hindi.

18   The character input system of claim 1 wherein the keyboard is adapted for use with one of the group of Bengali, Telegu, Marathi, Tamil, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Oriya, Punjabi, Assamese, Manipuri and Sanskrit.

19.   The character input system of claim 1 wherein the keyboard is adapted for use with any non-Indian Brahmi-based script.

20   The character input system of claim 1 wherein the keyboard is adapted for use with one of the group of Sinhala, Nepali, Burmese, Tibetan, Laotian, Thai, Khmer, Javanese, Bali, Batak, Bugis/Buginese and Tagalog.

21.   A keyboard for the use with a Brahmi-derived script comprising:
vowel keys mapped to the vowels, at least some of the vowel keys being arranged in a row;
initial consonant keys arranged in a plurality of subsets, each subset comprising keys mapped to a group of phonetically-related initial consonants, at least some of each subset of initial consonant keys being arranged on a single row;
final consonant keys mapped to final consonants, at least some of the final consonant keys being arranged in a row; and
a halant key mapped to halant character;
wherein Brahmi-derived script communications may be inputted quickly and efficiently as a result of the arrangement of character keys and a simplified character set provided through use of the halant character.

22.   The keyboard of claim 21 wherein a row comprises horizontally adjacent keys.

23.   The keyboard of claim 21 wherein the keyboard is adapted for use with the Hindi script.

24.   The keyboard of claim 21 wherein the initial consonants comprise Varg consonants and the final consonant comprise non-Varg consonants.

25.   A method of adapting a keyboard for a language that uses a Brahmi-derived script such as Hindi script, the method comprising:

mapping vowels to vowel keys arranged in a row;

mapping initial consonants to initial consonant keys arranged in a plurality of subsets, each subset comprising keys mapped to a group of phonetically-related initial consonants, each subset of initial consonant keys being arranged on a single row;

mapping final consonants to final consonant keys arranged in a row; and

mapping a halant character to a halant key;

wherein Brahmi-derived script communications may be inputted quickly and efficiently as a result of the arrangement of character keys and a simplified character set provided through use of the halant character.

26.   A computer system for use with a language that uses Brahmi-derived script, the computer system comprising:

a processor;

a memory system;

a graphical user interface; and

a Brahmi-derived script keyboard comprising a plurality of keys, at least some of the keys each being assigned at least one Brahmi-derived script character, and at least one key being assigned a halant, the key assignments being spatially grouped on the keyboard according to phonetic characteristics of the characters.

27.   The system of claim 26 wherein the keyboard comprises a virtual keyboard.

28.   The system of claim 26 wherein the virtual keyboard comprises a touch-sensitive screen.

29.   A keyboard adapted for use with Hindi script, the keyboard comprising:

a group of vowel keys each being assigned a Hindi script vowel, the vowel keys comprising keys corresponding to the number-row on a standard keyboard;

a first Varg group of phonetically-related consonant keys comprising keys corresponding to Q-W-E-R-T on a standard keyboard;

a second Varg group of phonetically-related consonant keys comprising keys corresponding to A-S-D-F-G on a standard keyboard;

a third Varg group of phonetically- related consonant keys comprising keys corresponding to Z-X-C-V-B on a standard keyboard;

a fourth Varg group of phonetically- related consonant keys comprising keys corresponding to Y-U-I-O-P on a standard keyboard; and

a fifth Varg group of phonetically- related consonant keys comprising keys corresponding to H-J-K-L-; on a standard keyboard.

a final group of Non-Varg consonant keys comprising keys corresponding to N-M-,-.-/-'-[-] on a standard keyboard.

30.   A character input system using a keyboard comprising a plurality of keys, at least some of the keys each being assigned at least one Hindi script character, and at least one key being assigned a halant, the key assignments being spatially grouped on the keyboard according to the vowels and consonants, their phonetic characteristics and the method in which the characters are learned.